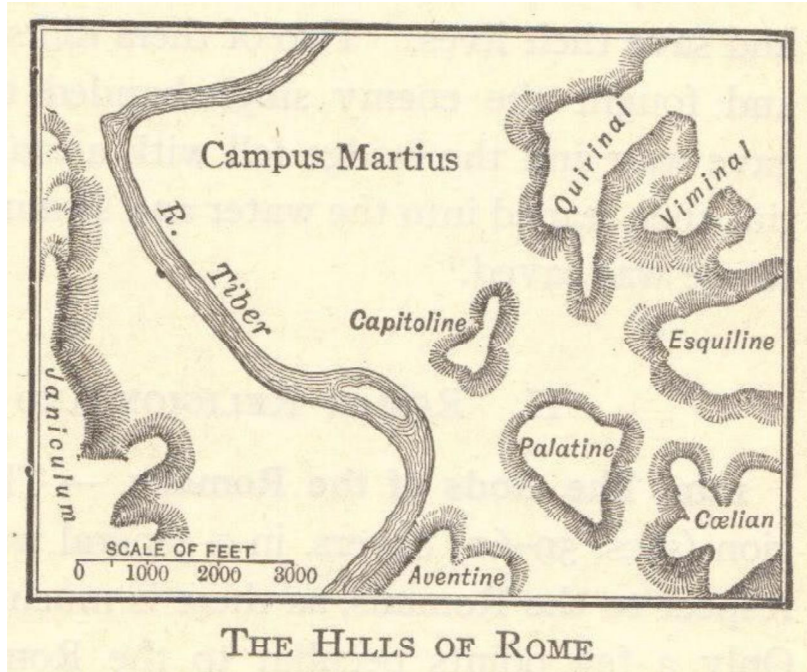


Establishment of the Roman Republic



**HISTORY WORKBOOK
FOR GRADES 7-12**

The Geography of Rome and Italy



The geographical features of ancient Rome and Italy provided protection. Rome itself was built on seven hills. The Alps of northern Italy provided a barrier against mainland Europe. Seas provided barriers along three sides of the Italian peninsula. Poor harbors on Italy's eastern coast meant that there was little interference from the cultures to the east.

Italy gradually became united under Roman rule. Rome is centrally located in Italy, making it a good location for a capital city. The

Apennine Mountains run north-south, and therefore were not a barrier to the unification of the peninsula.

Italy's fertile soil and mild climate made it good for agriculture (farming). The early Romans had no need to import foodstuffs.

The Italian peninsula's central location in the Mediterranean Sea was conducive to trade. Italy's viable ports became launching points for expansion throughout the Mediterranean region.

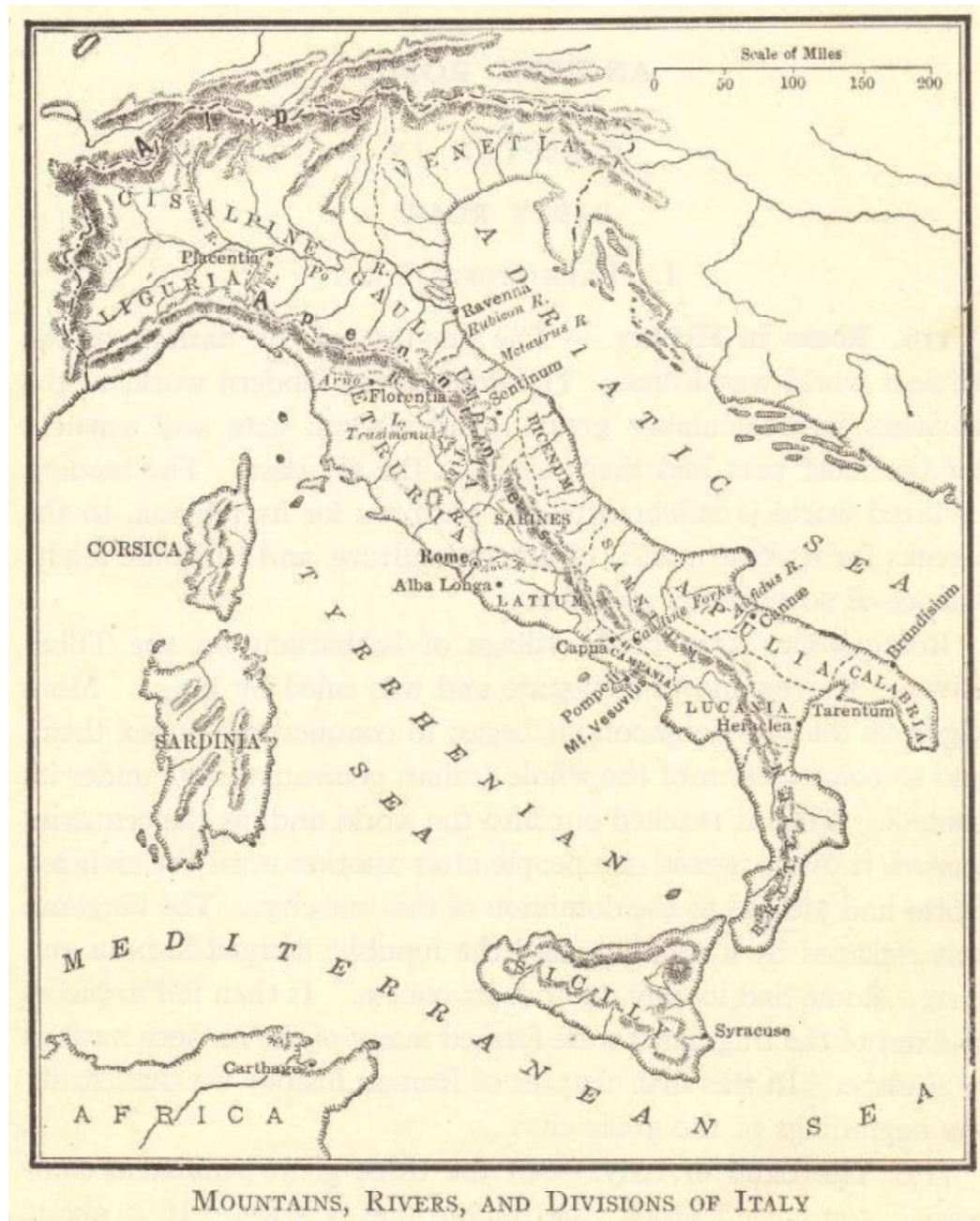
Why do you think that geographical barriers were necessary for protection in the ancient world? _____

Do geographic barriers provide modern countries with protection? Why or why not? Give at least one example for your argument. _____

Others Living in Early Italy

When we look at modern maps today, we see firm political boundaries. It might not occur to us how these boundaries developed, why they developed, or why they have changed

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over time. We must remember that in the ancient world, the human population was much smaller than it is today. Many tribal groups, of which there were many in ancient Europe, migrated from place to place. Because the local human populations were so small, groups might be separated by wide distances. So while today we see a map of a country such as Italy and label everyone “Italian,” this was not how people thought of themselves in ancient times. It was only through

the presence or development of strong cultural and historical ties, empire builders, and/or conquest that strong national identities were formed over time.

Look at the map above. Name at least six regions of ancient Italy. _____

At the time Rome came to prominence, Greek colonists had been living in the eastern portion of Sicily, as well as in the “heel” and “toe” of the Italian peninsula, for centuries. Carthaginian colonists (Carthage was originally a Phoenician colony, located in what is now

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Tunisia in northern Africa) lived in the western portion of Sicily. Gauls (who were most predominant in what is now France) occupied the lands between the Alps and the Po River.

Modern DNA research has revealed a great deal of our human genetic history. We inherit our genes from our parents, who inherited theirs from their parents, etc. By tracking mutations in the human genetic code, which occur every few generations or so, geneticists have traced a great many modern people back to their ancient ancestors. The migration of humans from Africa to locations around the globe is popularly known as the human journey.

A large portion of this genetic research is being done by the Genographic Project administered by the National Geographic Society. For a donation, you can even buy a kit to trace your own ancient origins. How cool is that? Check out the Atlas of Human History here, and read through the three listings (marked by dots) for Italy's human history: <https://genographic.nationalgeographic.com/genographic/lan/en/globe.html>

According to this website, who founded Rome? _____

The Ancient Etruscans

The ancient Etruscans are somewhat of a mystery. Their origins are lost to prehistory. One hypothesis is that the Etruscans were indigenous to central Italy—meaning that they were the first humans to live in the region. Another hypothesis contends that the Etruscans migrated from the east, north, or south, circa 1000 B.C.E.

The Etruscans lived just north of Rome. The region of modern Italy called “Tuscany” is named after their land, known in ancient times as Etruria. The Etruscans were enemies of the Romans.

Despite the animosity between the Romans and Etruscans, much of what we think of today as typically Roman is actually Etruscan. It was the Etruscans, rather than the Romans, who developed the arch in architecture, drainage and sewer-building, and the phalanx military formation.

Why do you suppose that we credit the Romans with Etruscan achievements? Consider the phrase: “To the victor go the spoils.” _____

The Latins

The Latins were an Indo-European tribe from the north. Circa 1200 B.C.E., they settled south of the Tiber River in an area that came to be called Latium. They formed the Latin League to ensure mutual protection. Rome was the leading city of this league.

According to legend, Rome was founded in 753 B.C.E. by the twin brothers Romulus and Remus. As infants, the twins were ordered drowned by an uncle who wanted the throne. The boys were saved, however, and raised by a she-wolf. When they grew up, they avenged themselves by killing their uncle. However, Romulus and Remus got into an argument over what to name the city they were founding. Romulus killed Remus, and therefore, the city of Rome was named after Romulus.

When we strip away supernatural elements (such as the she-wolf in the story of Romulus and Remus), we often see germs of truth. For centuries, the legend of Rome’s founding was considered completely fictional. Yet modern archaeologists’ excavations have revealed that early Rome was laid out just as described in the legend, and around the same year given by the legend—753 B.C.E. Therefore, based on logic and deduction, it is entirely possible that there was a leader named Romulus who founded Rome. The slayings of Remus and the boys’ uncle are also plausible.

The only element of the story that is truly implausible is Romulus and Remus being raised by a wolf. Accepting these possibilities as facts, why do you suppose that the ancient Romans added the supernatural element of a she-wolf raising two human children? Think about what comes into your mind when you envision two young boys raised by a wild creature. In crafting this element of the legend, what characteristics and traits were the Roman people giving to their culture?

The Three Major Periods of Roman History

Roman history can be divided into three principal periods—the founding of Rome, the Roman republic, and the Roman empire. While this workbook focuses on early Rome and the founding of the Republic, it is important to place these periods into the broader historical framework which is considered *ancient Rome*.

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The time period of Roman origins can be dated to between circa 1000 B.C.E. and 509 B.C.E. During this time, the earliest Roman settlements were built on Palatine Hill. Whether by Romulus and Remus or others, Rome was plotted around 753 B.C.E.

The Roman republic can be dated to between 509 B.C.E. and 31 B.C.E. The republic was founded when, under the leadership of Lucius Junius Brutus, the Etruscan kings were overthrown. The term *republic* means “thing of the people,” and during this time, Rome’s government developed many democratic elements. The republic ended in 31 B.C.E. with the Battle of Actium.

The Roman empire began in 31 B.C.E. under the rule of Augustus. Over time, the empire was split into eastern and western portions for ease in administration. Dates for Rome’s end differ among historians, but the most commonly accepted date is 476 C.E., when the barbarian Odoacer displaced the last official Western Roman emperor, Romulus Augustus. The Eastern Roman empire (also known as the Byzantine empire) endured much longer—it was intact until conquered by the Turks in 1453.

Why do you suppose that the study of history is typically divided into different periods? _____

Now back to the Roman republic...

Patricians and Plebeians

Patricians were nobles who controlled the government of the Roman republic. Executive power was held by two consuls, each elected by adult male patricians for a one-year term. The legislature was comprised of the Senate and the Assembly. The Senate was the upper house, filled by about 300 patricians who served for life and were controlled by about 12 leading families. The Assembly, the lower house, was filled by all free adult males who could afford weaponry. All acts of the Assembly had to be approved by the Senate.

Plebeians were the common people—the “plebs.” The plebeians had few rights and little political power. They could not run for public office, could not marry into the nobility (the patrician class), and they had little say in the creation of laws. Over the centuries, the plebeians were granted more and more rights, partly because they continuously threatened to secede from Rome and create their own city.

Imagine that you live in ancient Rome. Would you prefer to be a patrician or a plebeian? Why?

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Other Elected Roman Officials

Aediles ran city (local) government. Censors kept track of citizen lists, and in later years took charge of public morality. Dictators held absolute power; they were elected by the Senate in times of emergency to rule for six months. Praetors were in charge of administering justice. Quaesters were in charge of Roman finances.

What group of elected officials eventually took charge of public morality?

- a. Aediles
- b. Censors
- c. Dictators
- d. Praetors

The Growth of Democracy in Rome

Under the Roman republic, plebeians gradually earned greater rights. Over time, the Senate could no longer veto laws made by the Assembly (the “Comitia”). Intermarriage between plebeians and patricians became legal. Public offices were opened to plebeians. Plebeians earned the right to elect tribunes; these were officials with veto (“I forbid”) power over the Senate. Perhaps most importantly, the Twelve Tables were written in 450 B.C.E. The Twelve Tables, Rome’s first written laws, protected plebeians from biased patrician judges.

How might the modern justice system fail without written laws? _____

From Rome to Italy

Between 509 and 265 B.C.E., Rome came to control all of Italy south of the Po River. In 386 B.C.E., Gauls from the north plundered and burned Rome. The Romans got rid of the Gauls by paying them a large amount of gold. Rome turned its direction from the Gauls and conquered the remaining Etruscans, Rome’s former allies in the Latin League, various tribes in central Italy (such as the Samnites in 290 B.C.E., and Greek settlers to the south.

Why might paying off an attacker not be a good idea? _____

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Why was Rome so successful?

Rome was so successful because of four key things: infrastructure, military ability, effective strategy for domination, and its treatment of conquered peoples.

Ancient Rome's infrastructure rivaled anything in the Western world at the time, and for many centuries after Rome's fall. There were few geographical barriers on the Italian peninsula. Military roads radiated from Rome. Troops could be sent quickly to quell unrest in any area. These roads, originally designed for army use, came to allow quick and easy travel by tax collectors, traders, travelers, and officials. Some of Rome's most famous roads were the Appian Way, the Flaminian Way, and the Valerian Way. Public funds were dedicated to building and maintaining the republic's infrastructure—aqueducts brought water to cities, public baths and toilets promoted health and hygiene, and bridges eased transportation.

Rome's military ability, at its peak, was astounding. Soldiers under the republic were well trained. The army was comprised of volunteers.

The Roman strategy for domination was to divide, conquer, and control. Rome's fear was that its allies, enemies, and colonies would unite against Roman rule. Rome's solution to this problem was to keep the groups under Roman control disunited. This was done by forbidding alliances between them, along with establishing separate treaties and privileges for different groups under Roman control.

Overall, Rome treated its conquered peoples well. Some received Roman citizenship, including suffrage (the right to vote). Some controlled their own affairs but paid tribute to Rome and gave soldiers to the Roman army. Rome established colonies in conquered areas, each protected by a garrison of Roman soldiers. Under the republic, intermarriage was encouraged. These factors led to the spread of Roman culture and language (Latin).

Imagine that you are an ancient Greek, Hebrew, or Sicilian living under Roman control. List two pros and two cons for life under Roman rule. _____

Review Questions

1. What are the geographical barriers of the Italian peninsula?

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2. Apart from the Latins, what other groups lived in Italy?

3. According to tradition, who founded the Roman republic in 509 B.C.E.?

4. Who were the patricians, and what rights did they have?

5. Who were the plebeians, and what rights did they have?

6. Why was Rome so successful?

Roman Numerals

The Ancient Romans did not use our modern Arabic numerals. They wrote “5” as “V” and “10” as “X.” Check out this chart and use it to write your age, and the ages of members of your family, using Roman numerals: <https://studenthandouts.com/math/roman-numerals-converter-chart.html>
