

“The Ancient World”
Ancient Rome
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UNIT FIVE

The Fall of the Roman Republic

Many historians point to one person for the first failings of the Great Republic, a man names **Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus**.

Tiberius was not just any ordinary guy; he was the descendant of the great **Scipio** himself, the one and the same who defeated Hannibal in the Second Punic War.

Tiberius held the office of 'tribune', which is sort of like a judge/lawmaker. This position had originally been put into place in order to protect the interests of the "common" people.

How exactly did Tiberius Gracchus start the fall of the Roman Republic? He decided that he would give away state owned land to the poor citizens in Italy, stretches of land that had been said to be illegally occupied by the very wealthy.

Sounds good, even if it did make some people mad, but that was not the whole problem. Tiberius made a critical mistake; he took his proposal directly to the people without consulting the senate first.

While he was at it, he got a fellow tribune kicked out of office when he opposed his plan.

Tiberius got his proposal passed but he wasn't satisfied. Remember that the Roman Republic had what we now call "term limits" on how long they could serve in the government. Tiberius wanted to stand for re-election, something that just wasn't done.

He was murdered for his troubles. It is easy to feel sorry for him and conclude that he was just trying to do better for the poor, but throughout history that excuse has been used over and over to justify a selfish grab for power. Was Tiberius attempting to gain more control in the government? Historians don't have the answer to that one. We can only look at all sides and draw our own conclusions.

Meanwhile - Rome was expanding like there was no tomorrow, they had land everywhere and were taking in quite a bit of wealth while they were at it. However, every now and then, large numbers of soldiers would return to Rome after long campaigns fighting overseas, only to find their land had been taken by the government and given away to someone else.

This caused a lot of resentment and there was much unrest and **class warfare** going on. Class warfare is when rich people and poor people fight over who has the power and money. It is never a good thing because usually the rich will be punished even if they never did anything wrong; and the poor won't typically get anything, even though they could use some help.

In 123-122 BC, Tiberius's brother Gaius was elected to the **tribunate**, and quickly followed in his brother's footsteps by proposing entirely new controversial and radical legislation, or laws, including free food for the poor.

He too was murdered.

Then at the end of the century, **Gaius Marius**, a brilliant soldier, defeated enemies in Africa, Gaul and finally in Italy, when Rome's allies in Italy rebelled against her.

He held the highest office of state, the **consulship**, for at **LEAST** seven times, something that was completely unheard of.

Marius then came into violent conflict with **Lucius Cornelius Sulla**, another Roman warlord, who after victories in the east actually marched on Rome in 82 BC and established himself '**dictator**'.

Now remember that the title of dictator was only to be used in times of great crisis and then only for a period of 6 months so things could be brought under control. Sulla held this office for two years and during that time, he had over a thousand of his closest enemies put to death. He did eventually retire from office and miraculously, wasn't murdered.

The middle years of the first century BC were filled with violence. Two potential leaders appeared on the scene at this time, **Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus**, called '**Pompey the Great**' and **Julius Caesar**. They were friends and allies at first, Pompey conquered Turkey and Caesar took France, but soon political differences drove them into direct competition. Caesar was a radical like Tiberius Gracchus, but Pompey was a traditionalist and wasn't into those crazy new policies.

War between the two commanders erupted in 49 BC. By the end of 48 BC, Pompey was dead and Caesar declared himself as the sole ruler of Rome.

He did not actually call himself king or emperor, even though he controlled all the power, he, like Sulla, called himself **dictator**.

He didn't last long. But he did have time to reform the outdated calendar. We can thank Caesar for the introduction of Leap Year. He was murdered in 44 BC by a bunch of senators.

After his death, there was a decade of civil war and unrest while Caesar's supporters finished off his assassins and then proceeded to fight amongst themselves.

In 31 BC **Octavian**, who was Caesar's nephew, defeated **Marc Antony** in northern Greece. Octavian changed his name to **Augustus** to try and wipe the years of conflict associated with his name from the memory of the people. It turned out to be a good idea. He ruled for 40 years and when he died in 14 AD, his stepson Tiberius was right there to take over for him. By that time, no one could even remember a time when Rome was a Free Republic.



Statue of Octavian Augustus

UNIT SIX

The Rise of the Roman Empire



The rise of the Roman Empire and the fall of the Roman Republic could be considered one and the same because one could not have happened without the other, and both were happening at the same time.

In order to fully understand what happened when Rome became an Empire, you must first understand the differences between it, and the Republic. We have learned already that a **Republic** was a form of government where representatives were elected from a general (or maybe not so general) population of people, and these representatives made the laws for the people. There were two consuls who directed things, and these positions as well, were to benefit the people. The people had power, maybe not a lot of power, but still, it was there and they felt comfort in this fact.

An **Emperor, on the other hand, rules an Empire**. The emperor is not elected and typically, when one emperor dies, a close male relative, usually a son, ascends the position and becomes the new emperor.

It is also important to understand what an empire is. To be an empire means that a group of nations and people are ruled by one person, the emperor. These nations will typically be ruled by

force, they were not always part of the empire, but through war, they were taken over. You might be getting the idea just about now that empires are not so good. You'd be right, of course, because no one wants a foreign army to come into their country and force them to live by strange governments and traditions.

As we read in the last unit, Octavian or **Augustus** as he had renamed himself, was the very first Roman Emperor. His uncle was **Julius Caesar** and we did not talk too much about him, but he is definitely a historic figure and deserves his appropriate place in history. He is after all, the one man most responsible for both the fall of the Roman Republic and the rise of the Roman Empire.

Now, let's not give Caesar too much credit, it would be a most powerful man indeed to have that much influence over such a large population of people. The fall of the Republic was more than a single man or event, more than just Caesar. Things were not going well at this time in history, slaves were uprising, citizens were demanding more rights, and soldiers were being manipulated by high ranking officers (such as Julius Caesar) into fighting for their general instead of for their country. The generals in return were promising these loyal soldiers land. It seems that at this time in history, everyone wanted a piece of Rome and all were willing to take it by force.

Julius Caesar, through many battles that we won't get into, was the last man standing. He gave the government the stability which it needed very badly, and that is how one man allowed the downfall of the Republic and enabled the rise of the Empire.

Now there was only one more piece of the puzzle to be put in motion for the Republic to fall apart completely, and that was the death of Caesar.

Caesar did not have any sons of his own, but he had adopted his nephew Octavian.

We have already talked about the rise of Octavian (Augustus) in the last unit but we did not give any details of his successes. It was pointed out in the last unit, and you probably discovered this yourself when you did your report, that Augustus was a pretty good leader. He is really the man responsible for giving the Empire the much-needed **reforms** in the government. Reform means to make changes, hopefully for the better. He brought peace back to the people and even called it the "**New Republic**". He allowed the people to feel prosperous again, and they liked that very much.

The Empire was not a republic though, no matter what you called it. Augustus made himself **dictator** with complete power and control. When he died in 14AD his adopted son, **Tiberius**, took the throne, so just like the old Kings that Rome had turned their backs on, Tiberius claimed his right to rule by means of family ties.

The republic was never to be seen again.



ACTIVITES for UNIT SIX

6.1 Matching Vocabulary

Directions: Match the vocabulary word on the left with the proper definition on the right. Put the correct letter on the blank.

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. _____ New Republic | A. General who started the Empire |
| 2. _____ Empire | B. Second Emperor |
| 3. _____ Emperor | C. First Emperor |
| 4. _____ Tiberius | D. Supreme ruler |
| 5. _____ Caesar | E. Political change |
| 6. _____ Octavian Augustus | F. Old form of government |
| 7. _____ Republic | G. Was really a dictatorship |
| 8. _____ Reforms | H. Lands ruled as one |

Activity 6.2

Multiple Choice

Read the sentence and circle the best answer.

1. Augustus made himself _____ with complete power and control. .
 - a. Pharaoh
 - b. King
 - c. Emperor
2. Caesar did not have any sons of his own, but he had adopted his nephew _____.
 - a. Octavian
 - b. Augustine
 - c. Octavius
3. _____ gave the government the stability, which it needed very badly, allowing the downfall of the Republic and enabled the rise of the Empire.
 - a. Octavius
 - b. Augustus
 - c. Caesar
4. The _____ was never to be seen again.
 - a. Empire
 - b. Monarchy
 - c. Republic
5. _____ means that a group of nations and people are ruled by one person, the _____.
 - a. Emperor, Empire
 - b. Empire, Emperor
 - c. Monarchy, King

Activity 6.3

True or False?

Put a T for true or a F for false in the blank next to the question.

1. _____ The rise of the Roman Empire and the fall of the Roman Republic could be considered one and the same.
2. _____ In order to fully understand what happened when Rome became an Empire, you must first understand the differences between it, and the republic.
3. _____ Caesar did not have any sons of his own, but he had adopted his nephew Tiberius.
4. _____ Augustus made himself dictator with complete power and control.
5. _____ Reform means to keep things the way there always were.
6. _____ Augustus died in 14AD.
7. _____ Augustus' adopted son, Tiberius, took the throne.
8. _____ No one wants a foreign army to come into their country and force them to live by strange governments and traditions.
9. _____ A Republic is a form of government where representatives were elected from a general population of people, and these representatives made the laws for the people.