Emperors and Empires

Founding of Rome

There are two explanations for the founding of the city of Rome in Italy.

Mythical version

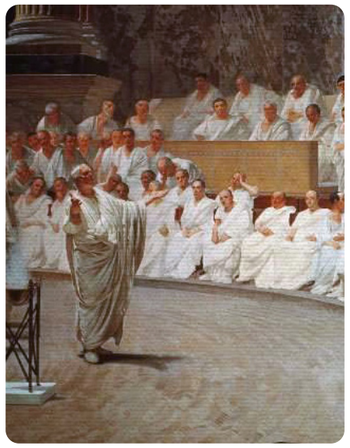
Romans believed that the city was built by Romulus, the son of the god Mars, on 21st April 753 BC.

Historical version

Historians believe that the city started as a collection of small settlements that were built on hills near the River Tiber. Over time, they grew and joined together to form a city.

Ruling Rome

Ancient Rome was ruled in three different ways. At first, Rome was a kingdom (753–509 BC) led by a king. Next it was a republic (509–27 BC) led by two consuls and a group of 600 men called a senate. Finally, it was an empire (27 BC–AD 476) ruled by an emperor.



Roman senate

Emperors

An emperor is the male ruler of an empire. Roman emperors had absolute power. Some emperors, like Trajan (AD 53–117), used this power wisely. Other emperors, like Commodus (AD 161–192), were foolish and selfish.

Commodus

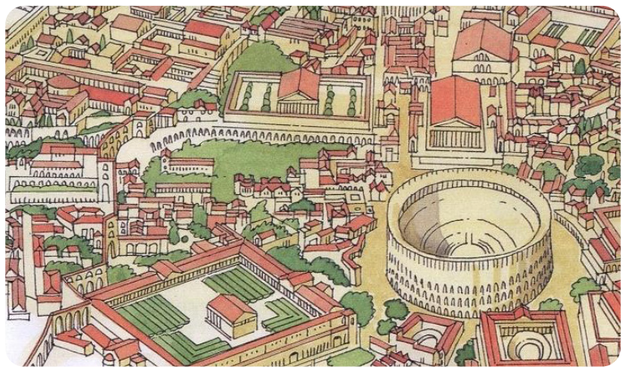
Growth of an empire

The Roman army conquered countries all around the Mediterranean Sea and so the Roman Empire grew to include many neighbouring lands. It was at its largest between AD 117 and AD 200.

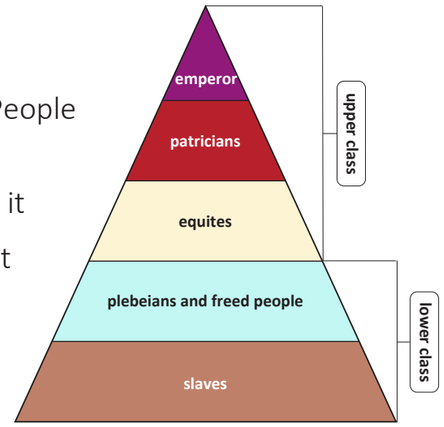
Roman Empire, AD 117–200

Ancient Rome

Ancient Rome was a bustling city of over one million people. At the centre of the city was a meeting place called the forum, and a basilica where court cases and official business took place. The people of Rome lived in houses and apartments around the city. They visited the shops and markets, bathed at the public baths and visited the Colosseum to watch gladiator fights for entertainment.



Social hierarchy



Ancient Rome had a well-structured hierarchy. People were born into a group and couldn't usually move from it during their lifetime. Almost every group had Roman citizenship, which meant they had rights and could vote. However, slaves were not Roman citizens so they had no rights and were owned by individuals or the government.

Roman army

The Roman army was well structured and had a clear hierarchy, which made it the most effective fighting force in the ancient world. The army was led by high ranking officers and ordinary soldiers were expected to follow commands and keep an oath to the emperor. All soldiers had similar equipment, armour, shields for protection and javelins and swords for fighting. Soldiers were well trained and fit. After an invasion, they also used their skills as engineers and builders to create forts, towns, roads and bridges in the countries they conquered.

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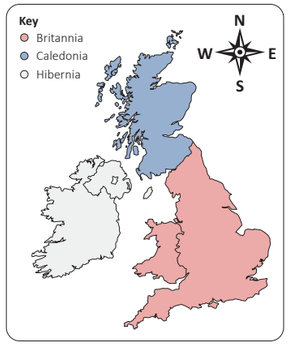
Romans in Britain

Invasion

Julius Caesar invaded Britain in 55 and 54 BC, but both invasions were unsuccessful. The Roman emperor, Claudius, successfully conquered Britain in AD 43.



Britannia

The Roman army spent many years, conquering Britain. After 30 years, England and Wales became part of the Roman Empire, called Britannia. Caledonia (Scotland) and Hibernia (Ireland) were never conquered by the Romans.

Boudicca

Boudicca was the queen of the Celtic Iceni tribe who revolted against Roman rule in AD 60–61. She and her army of tribal warriors destroyed the Roman cities of Camulodunum (Colchester), Londinium (London) and Verulamium (St Albans).

Hadrian's Wall

The emperor, Hadrian, ordered that a wall should be built along the frontier of Caledonia and Britannia in AD 122. Parts of Hadrian's Wall can still be seen in Northumberland today.

Timeline of Roman Britain

- **55–54 BC** – First and second invasion of Britain by Julius Caesar
- **AD 43** – Claudius invades and conquers Britain
- **AD 60–61** – Boudicca rebels against Roman rule
- **AD 122** – Hadrian's Wall is built
- **AD 211** – Londinium becomes the capital of Roman Britain
- **AD 313** – Christianity becomes legal in the Roman Empire
- **cAD 400** – Roman army gradually leaves Britannia
- **AD 410** – Roman rule ends

Romanisation of Britain

Towns

The Romans built towns in Britain that were similar to towns across the Roman Empire. Britons living in towns adopted a Roman lifestyle.

Inventions

The Romans brought roads, aqueducts, hypocausts, public baths, toilets, money and the Latin language to Britain.

Londinium

Londinium was founded near the River Thames cAD 50. It grew and became the capital of Roman Britain.

Christianity

Emperor Constantine made Christianity legal in AD 313. Some people in Britannia became Christians.

Glossary

absolute power	Complete authority to make decisions.
aqueduct	A channel for carrying water, normally in the form of a bridge across a valley or other gap.
consul	One of two men who held the highest position in the senate of the Roman Republic.
empire	A group of countries ruled by a single person, government or country.
hierarchy	A system where people or things are arranged in order of importance.
hypocaust	A system of underfloor heating invented by the ancient Romans.
Roman citizen	A person who had privileges and protection from the Roman state.
Romanise	To become Roman.
Romano-British culture	The culture that was created in Britannia after the Roman invasion.

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