





## ***The Birth of Ancient Rome***

## **Beginnings**

When we think about beginnings, we often don't know that they actually *are* beginnings until time is well on its way.

Most civilisations and cultures tell the stories of their own beginnings. Little was written down about much of the ancient world. Also, many stories involved the different gods belonging to each culture. Legend and fact became interwoven.

Imagine living back in 753 BCE. Would you have any idea a new era was about to begin that would change the world forever? This is what happened with the beginning of the Roman Empire. Later, two stories were melded into one, which covered many years:

### **Aeneas**

In his poem, *The Iliad*, the Greek poet Homer told of mythical hero Aeneas. In about 1184 BCE he escaped from Troy, which had been destroyed by the Greeks. Aeneas travelled to what we now know as Italy and many kings and emperors descended from him.

Much later, the Roman poet Virgil wrote *The Aeneid*, describing Aeneas' journey to Rome.

### **Romulus and Remus**

King Numitor, a descendant of Aeneas, lost his throne to his brother Amulius, but his daughter Rhea Silvia bore twin boys, Romulus and Remus, by the war god Mars. Their birthday, 21 April, 753 BCE, is the traditional founding date for Ancient

Rome. Amulius didn't want these children to challenge him to the throne, so he set the babies afloat on the river Tiber. They did not perish, but washed up beneath a fig tree. A she-wolf suckled and raised them.

Romulus and Remus grew into strong and bold leaders. They killed Amulius and regained the throne for their grandfather Numitor. After this, they set out together to found a city of their own. They quarrelled about where this place should be, and who should lead the new city. Romulus killed his brother, and founded the city of Rome.

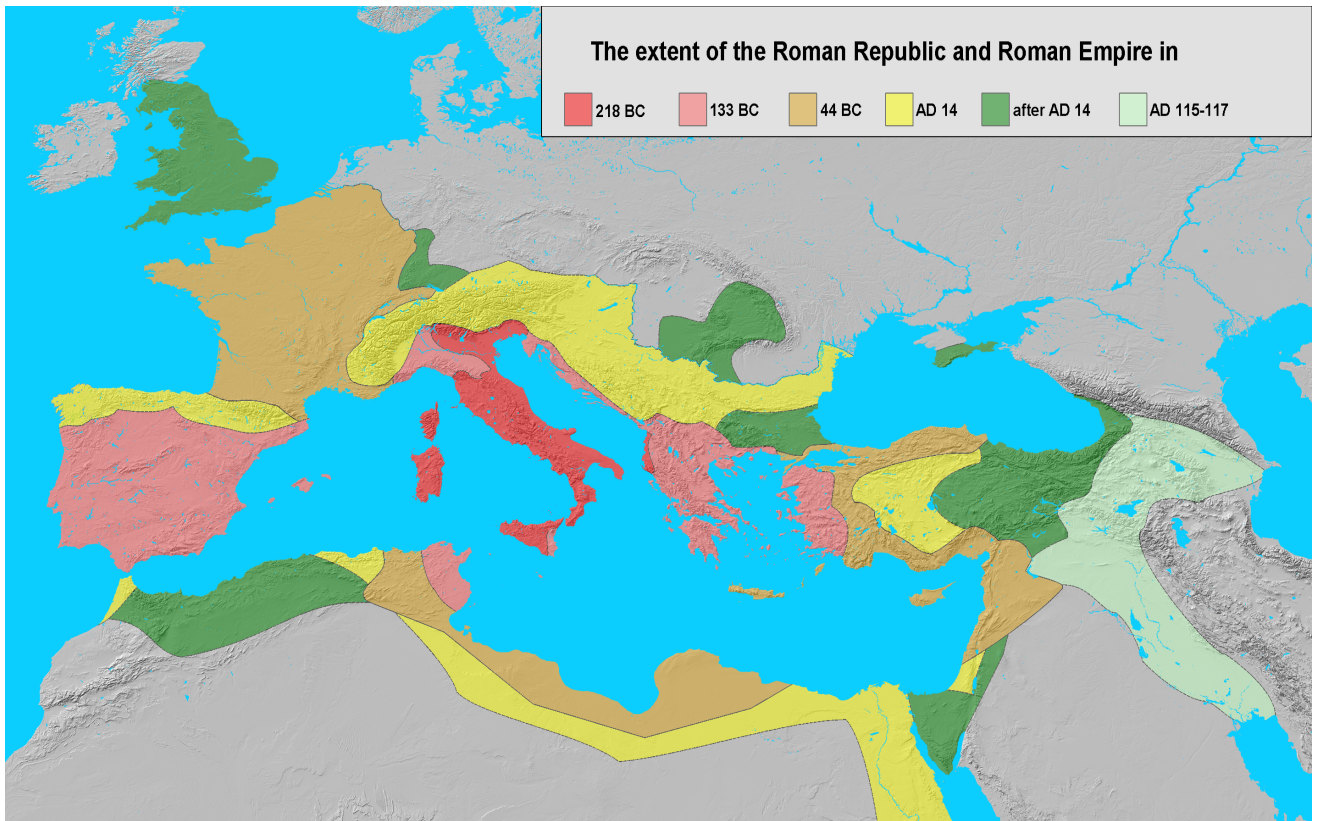
This place began as a tiny village along the river Tiber. There was plenty of fresh water and good soil for crops. The river could be used for transportation. Surrounding Rome were seven hills, a natural defensive barrier.

## **Organised Warfare**

In ancient times, human civilisation was growing in different parts of the world. Groups of people would declare war against each other in order to strengthen their own land holdings. The Romans became the strongest of these tribes.

The Romans wanted to expand the kingdom and became very organised in their methods of warfare. Their armies were highly disciplined; they wore uniforms and carried weapons and shields. The leader of a group of one hundred soldiers was called a centurion.

The legions would carry out different marches and formations: war strategies that were successful, and stunning to watch! For example, when approaching enemy fortifications, they used the turtle formation, or testudo, overlapping their shields for protection.



*Roman rule began in Italy, and spread to many other lands*

## **A Republic**

Now that Rome was a powerful force in the world, changes happened within its walls. There were distinctions between the upper class and the lower class. Corruption and greed filtered down from the upper class.

A new system of ruling was created around 509 BCE. It was the first model of government: elected officials oversaw equality and justice for all citizens, similar to our own democratic system. Instead of kings there were now senators. The Roman Republic began. It stayed this way for several hundred years.

## **The Roman Empire**

Julius Caesar became the most powerful senator in Rome. He ended the Republic by having the Senate proclaim him dictator. He was very popular, and created strong and stable government to increase prosperity. Caesar was assassinated in 44 BCE by his enemies, and finally, after many battles and troubles, Augustus became the first Emperor of Rome in 27 BCE.

The Roman Empire was eventually destroyed by the Visigoths in 476 BCE (from where we now call Germany); its last emperor was Romulus Augustus.

## **What we learned from Ancient Rome**

The Romans were known for their strong warlike activities. However, they also bequeathed to us the foundations for many things modern society values. Here are some:

Subject	Example
Language	Terra firma, status quo
Entertainment	Plays, baths
Philosophy	Aristotle
Architecture	Colosseum, Pantheon
Water management	Aqueducts, drains and sewers
Law and Order	Senators, elections
Agriculture	Farming, food production

### *FUN FACT*

*The Romans built aqueducts – systems of channels and bridges – to transport water for public baths and toilets. In other parts of Europe, people were still throwing their waste out of windows into the street, which added to disease and unpleasant surroundings! It took until the Renaissance, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, for things to improve elsewhere.*

**Learn more about Ancient Rome by visiting these websites:**

[www.ngkids.co.uk](http://www.ngkids.co.uk)

[www.ancient.eu/Rome/](http://www.ancient.eu/Rome/)

### **References:**

*Cover illustration:* Roman aqueducts, with permission from:

[www.homeschoolingwaldorf.com /.../grade-6-roman-history](http://www.homeschoolingwaldorf.com/.../grade-6-roman-history)

*Map:* [www.commonswikimedia.org](http://www.commonswikimedia.org) Extent of the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire between 218 BC and 117AD.png

[www.ancient.eu/Rome/](http://www.ancient.eu/Rome/)

[www.history.com /this-day-in-history/rome-founded](http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/rome-founded)

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