

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Roman Empire after Caesar Augustus

Caesar Augustus had complete power in Rome, but he showed great respect for the Senate. Later emperors made no secret of their power. The Senate continued to exist, but senators had little control over the affairs of the empire. Some of the emperors who followed Augustus ruled wisely. Others were foolish and cruel.

Nero was perhaps the most notorious emperor in Roman history. Nero became emperor when his mother conspired to kill his stepfather. Once Nero came to power, he ordered his mother's execution. Nero also killed two wives and a stepbrother. Nero ruled the empire by day, but at night he prowled the streets of Rome assaulting women.

Nero believed himself to be the most talented person in the Roman Empire. Never before had an emperor performed on a stage as an actor or singer.

Many Roman nobles considered Nero's performances to be outrageous and lacking talent, but no one would risk torture or death by criticizing the emperor. In AD67, Nero toured Greece. He participated in many games and contests, but no rival dared to beat the emperor. As Nero devoted himself to his artistic pursuits, he lost ruling power. In AD68, Nero faced an attack from his soldiers. His guard claimed Nero cried out, "What an artist the world is losing," as he stabbed himself in the neck.

The Roman Empire reached its greatest size in AD117 under the emperor Trajan. The empire extended from Britain and Spain, across France, southern Germany, and the Balkan Mountains. The empire also included North Africa, and stretched as far east as the Caspian Sea.

In AD121, the emperor Hadrian built a wall across northern England to keep out invaders from Scotland. The Romans called the Scots "barbarians," possibly because their Celtic language reminded the Romans of the sounds made by sheep. In time, the Romans called all of the people they felt were uncultured "barbarians." Barbarian warriors from Germany would later lead to the end of the

Roman Empire.

The Romans used great public projects to make their capital city the most advanced of the ancient world, and to create the largest empire of the era. The Romans particularly excelled at building roads. The roads made it easier to travel, move troops, collect taxes and trade with faraway provinces. The expression, "All Roads Lead To Rome" refers to the fact that Rome was the center of the ancient civilized world. Many of the roads, bridges and aqueducts of ancient Rome are still used today.

Roman engineers brought water into the city by building water bridges called aqueducts. Nine aqueducts provided the Roman people with 38 million gallons of water every day. Parts of the Roman aqueduct system still supply water to fountains in Rome.



The Romans built many huge stadiums called amphitheaters. People would gather in amphitheaters to watch shows with clowns, jugglers and acrobats.

Some Roman entertainment was very cruel. People would watch fights between wild animals and gladiators. Gladiators were usually slaves or criminals who fought with swords against animals or one another. A skillful gladiator might win his freedom by defeating an opponent. More often, the gladiators lost their lives.

The greatest Roman amphitheater, the Colosseum, still dominates the Roman skyline. Only a portion of the Colosseum remains standing. Earthquakes destroyed some of the structure. Some of the stone used to build St. Peter's Basilica, the church in the Vatican where the Pope resides, came from the Colosseum.

Perhaps the greatest Roman engineering achievement was the sewer. Because Rome is in a valley among seven hills, there is nowhere for dirty water to go. The sewer system made it possible for Rome to become the largest city in the world. The population of the city of Rome swelled to more than one million people at the height of the empire.

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**Answer in complete sentences**

1. List four examples of Roman technology.

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\*2. How do you think Rome's many roads eventually helped lead to the downfall of the city?

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\*3. Roman leaders encouraged some of the more bloodthirsty elements of Roman entertainment. Do you think this type of entertainment is good or bad for a society? Explain your answer.

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\*4. What problems would have occurred in Rome if the city that large did not have an adequate sewage system?

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\*5. Explain why only a portion of the Roman Colosseum remains standing.

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\*6. Do you think that managing the Roman Empire in AD117 was easy or difficult? Defend your answer.

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\*7. Xenophobia is the fear or contempt of foreign people and cultures? Describe an example of Roman xenophobia.

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\*This is a higher order learning question. You will earn credit for any reasonable answer.