

RISE OF ROME: ANCIENT ITALY



West of Greece on the Mediterranean Sea lies the land of Italy. Over 3000 years ago, a people called the Latins settled in Italy. They built a village on the Tiber River. That village became the most powerful city of the ancient world—Rome.

The Romans built a great civilization in Italy. In time, Roman civilization spread throughout much of Europe. Roman ideas about architecture, government, and law were important to the development of Western civilization.

- What contributions did the Etruscans and Greeks make to ancient Rome?
- How was ancient Rome governed?
- How did Rome build an empire?
- How did Rome change after building its empire?

Key Words You will be using these words in this chapter. Look them up in the Glossary at the back of Part. 1.

civil war
dictator

republic
treaty

Italy is located on a peninsula in southern Europe. The Italian Peninsula reaches far into the Mediterranean Sea.

Like Greece, most of Italy is covered *by* mountains. Mountains called the Alps run across northern Italy. The **Apennine Mountains** stretch the length of Italy.

The land east of the Apennine Mountains is poor. In ancient times, few people settled there. But western Italy has areas of flat, fertile farmland. People settled there and raised wheat and other grains.

Western Italy also has good harbors and rivers. One of those rivers runs through the center of Italy. It is called the **Tiber River**.

The Latins

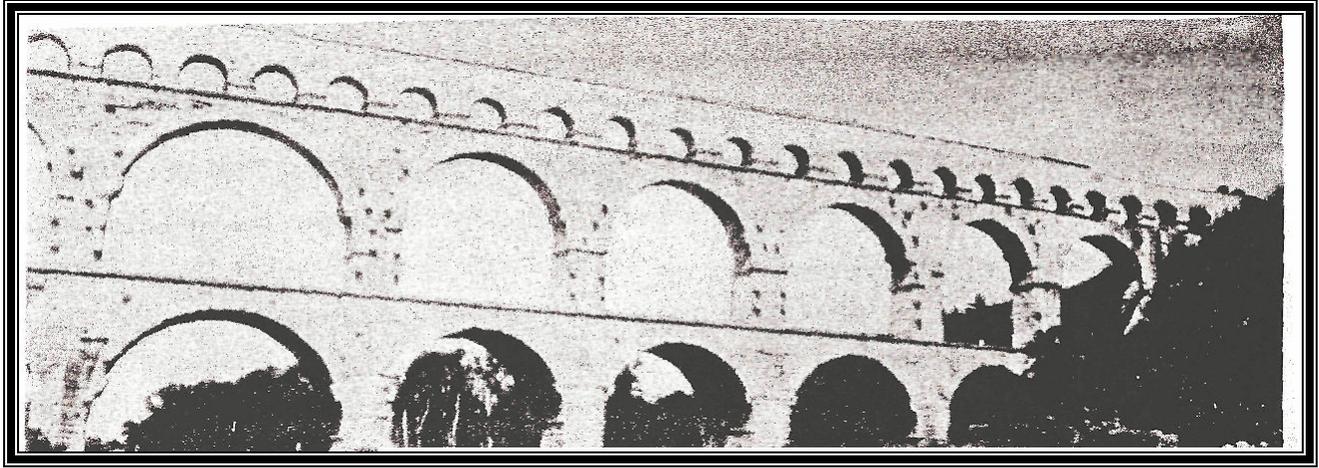
You read that the Mycenaeans moved into Greece about 2000 B.C. At about the same time, other groups of people were crossing the Alps into Italy. One of those groups was the **Latins**.

The Latins were farmers and herders from central Europe. They settled on a broad plain beside the Tiber River. Their land became known as Latium.

The Latins built settlements throughout Latium. One of the settlements spread across seven hills beside the Tiber River. By about 750 B.C. that settlement had grown into a village called **Rome**,

Looking Back

1. Where is Italy located?
2. Who were the Latins? Where did they settle?



The Early History of Rome

Little is known about the early days of Rome. But, like other peoples, the Romans had legends about their past. One of those legends describes the founding of Rome.

The legend tells of a princess in Italy who had twin sons. They were named Romulus and Remus. The twins' uncle was a king. He feared the boys would someday overthrow him. The king ordered the babies to be thrown into the Tiber River.

The gods took pity on the boys and brought them safely to shore. A wolf cared for the babies until they were found by herders. When the twins grew up, they killed their uncle. Then they built a city beside the Tiber River where they had come ashore. That city was Rome.

The Etruscans

About 600 B.C., a people called the Etruscans conquered Rome. No one knows where the Etruscans came from. They may have come to Italy from Asia Minor.

For the next 100 years, Etruscan kings ruled Rome. During that time, Rome grew into a busy trading city.

The Etruscans taught the Romans to build roads and sewers. They also taught the Romans to use the *arch* in building. (An arch is a curved structure that can support a heavy weight.) The Romans used arches to build stone bridges across the Tiber River.

The Romans built *aqueducts* to carry water from mountain streams to their cities. This aqueduct still stands in France. Notice that the Romans used arches to support the weight of the aqueduct.

The Romans also borrowed their alphabet from the Etruscans. (The Etruscans had borrowed their alphabet from the Greeks.) The Romans used the Etruscan alphabet to write their own language, called Latin. Today, the Roman alphabet is used to write many languages, including English, French, Spanish, and German,

The Greeks

Since about 750 B.C., the Greeks had been building colonies in southern Italy. Through trade, the Romans came into contact with the Greeks.

The Romans learned to raise olives and grapes from the Greeks. They copied Greek drama, art, and architecture. They studied Greek philosophy and science. And they borrowed religious ideas and even gods from the Greeks. Later, the Romans spread Greek culture throughout Europe.

Looking Back

1. What happened to Rome about 600 B.C.?
2. What did the Romans learn from the Etruscans?
3. What did the Romans borrow from the Greeks?

The Roman Republic

You read that Etruscan kings ruled Rome for 100 years. In about 509 B.C. the Romans rebelled against the Etruscans and drove them from Rome.

The Romans no longer wished to be ruled by kings. Instead, they set up a form of government called a *republic*. In a republic, people who have the right to vote elect their leaders. Those leaders run the government for the people.

The Roman Republic became an example for later people, including the people who founded the United States government.

Government in the Republic

The highest officials in the Roman Republic were called **consuls**. The consuls *commanded* (led) the Roman army. They also made sure that taxes were collected and laws were carried out. A consul held office for only one year. That made it difficult for any consul to grow too powerful.

Assemblies of citizens helped to rule Rome. The most powerful assembly was the **Senate**. It was made up of 300 people. The Senate proposed laws. It also elected the consuls and gave them advice.

Social Classes in Rome

There were two social classes in the Roman Republic. The upper class was made up of wealthy landowners called *patricians*. The lower class was made up of farmers, workers, and merchants. They were known as *plebeians*.

The patricians controlled the government. Only patricians could become consuls or senators. Plebeians could not hold office.

This clay bust, or head, of a Roman man was made during the time of the republic.



Plebeians Call for Reforms

Plebeians had to pay taxes. They had to serve in the army. But they had little voice in government. Beginning in the 400s B.C., plebeians began to call for reforms.

At first, the patricians refused to reform the government. Then the plebeians took action. They refused to serve in the army. They even threatened to leave Rome and set up their own city.

Those threats forced the patricians to make changes in the government. The plebeians won the right to elect officials called tribunes. A tribune could *veto*, or block, actions by any government official or by the Senate. Tribunes used that power to protect the rights of plebeians.

The plebeians also won the right to elect their own assembly. It was called the Assembly of Tribes. At first, the assembly had little power. But later, it passed laws for all of Rome.

Looking Back

1. What were the duties of the consuls in the republic? of the Senate?
2. What people made up the upper class of Rome? the lower class?
3. What changes gave plebeians a greater voice in government?