Ancient Rome: Notes

How did geography influence Roman history?

Italian Peninsula- midpoint of Mediterranean Sea

Alps- isolated the peninsula from Europe

Rome: built 15 miles inland from the sea on the Tiber River- excellent location to send out trade and military ships

Romulus and Remus- twin brothers, raised by a she-wolf. Parents had died.
  • Romulus kills his brother Remus.
  • The city of Rome is named after Romulus.
  • The story is symbolic of Roman toughness.

The Roman Republic

Culture: 3 groups of people important to Rome’s development

1) Latins- provided language

2) Greeks- religious ideas and architecture

3) Etruscans- early kings and alphabet (cruel)

Politics: ruled by Etruscan kings until 509B.C.
• People wanted a change/appointed two men called consuls to rule
• New government established called a Republic
  o People who governed were elected by the citizens

Roman Senate:
• 300 Patricians served for life
• Advised government officials
• Used force of law

Roman Citizens: divided into two classes

Patricians- wealthy, could hold office, upper-class families owned land, men could vote

Plebians- majority, common people, couldn’t hold office, men could vote

Women and slaves were not citizens

Roman Confederation:
• Formed to rule Italy
• Allowed some people full citizenship
• Remaining communities allies
  o Allowed to run local affairs, had to provide soldiers to Rome, loyal allies could become citizens in Rome
Military: both classes joined together to fight as one
  • Formed massive units called legions
  • Proved superior to Greeks

Roman Republic Expands its Territory

Punic Wars: lasted 100 years (Carthage vs. Rome)
  • Take on Carthage for control of Mediterranean

1st War: Rome defeats the powerful Carthaginian navy
  • The victory gives them Sicily

2nd War: Hannibal (Carthage’s greatest general) wanted revenge on Rome
  • Led his 60,000 man army and 38 elephants across the Alps and fought for 15 yrs.
  • Couldn’t get through the large walls that surrounded Rome
  • Roman General, Scipio, attacks Carthage and defeats Hannibal’s army

3rd War: Rome destroys Carthage
  • Carthage attacked Rome’s alley—Rome attacks Carthage
  • Cut off food to the city and burned it to the ground
  • Romans gain control of N. Africa in 146 B.C.
  • Become “super power” of the Med. Region
Roman Republic Faces Problems

Patricians and Plebians battle after the Punic Wars

• Plebians wanted political and social equality
• Plebian soldiers return to find their land had been sold to the Patricians (due to unpaid taxes)
• They move to the city to find jobs, there are no jobs, find slaves doing the work
• Battles break out between the two groups

Military Leaders Take Power

• Marius (Plebian) and Sulla (Patrician) battle for control, Sulla wins and becomes dictator
• He is replaced by the First Triumvirate in 60 B.C. (Crassus, Pompey, & Julius Caesar share power)

Julius Caesar:
• “Crosses the Rubicon” and takes control of Rome
• Caesar puts an end to the Republic and becomes dictator in 44 B.C.
• Well liked by the Plebians and famous throughout Rome for his conquests
• Hated by the Senate (because he put an end to the Republic)