

Ancient Rome

- Rome is known as the city of seven hills. It began as a small town on the Tiber River, located in what is now central Italy. Over time, it grew into the center of a mighty empire that spread across what is now England, most of continental Europe, and parts of Asia and northern Africa.
- The ancient Romans excelled in their military skills and political institutions. Rome incorporated conquered people into their political system. Rather than alienating conquered nations, the Romans permitted those who adopted their ways to become Roman citizens and to hold seats in the Senate.
- Rome was a monarchy until 509 B.C., when the Roman Republic was formed and the king was replaced by two officials called consuls. The consuls were elected each year by the Roman army, and they tended to be generals. The two consuls shared equal power, which helped to check the potential abuse of power.
- A Senate served to advise both the consuls and the Roman people. It is thought that this body was originally made up of elderly men (*senes* in Latin). Senators usually came from prestigious families and had a great amount of power over the people.
- Following the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 B.C., his nephew Octavian engaged in a struggle for power with other Roman leaders. Octavian emerged triumphant in 30 B.C. He ended the civil wars that had torn apart the Roman Republic in the preceding decades. Many of the republic's institutions and traditions were kept alive on the surface. However, in reality, a new imperial form of government replaced the republic. Octavian was given the name Augustus as a sign of his supreme authority.
- Roman engineering was quite advanced, and the city benefited from hundreds of roads and bridges, fresh water supplied by aqueducts, functional sewers, and public buildings such as the Colosseum and the Pantheon.
- Ancient Rome had a lasting impact on Western society. Its legacy includes the 26-letter alphabet, the 12-month calendar of 365.25 days, and the Romance languages that developed in Europe from the Latin language of the Romans.